

Livestock and gender



In much of the developing world, livestock are a vital—sometimes the only—asset owned by women and girls in rural areas. Building blocks for the economic empowerment of women, livestock are mobile and self-propagating assets, often controlled by women. Especially in rural areas, where opportunities are scarce, livestock and related value chains provide a range of investment options for women to increase their independence and improve their families' livelihoods.

The International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI)—guided by its gender team—uses research to develop livestock and evidence-based solutions for investment by the global community in enhancing the capacities, livelihoods and roles of women and girls in their communities. This work is an essential part of ILRI delivering on its mission to improve food and nutritional security and reduce poverty in developing countries through research for efficient, safe and sustainable use of livestock.

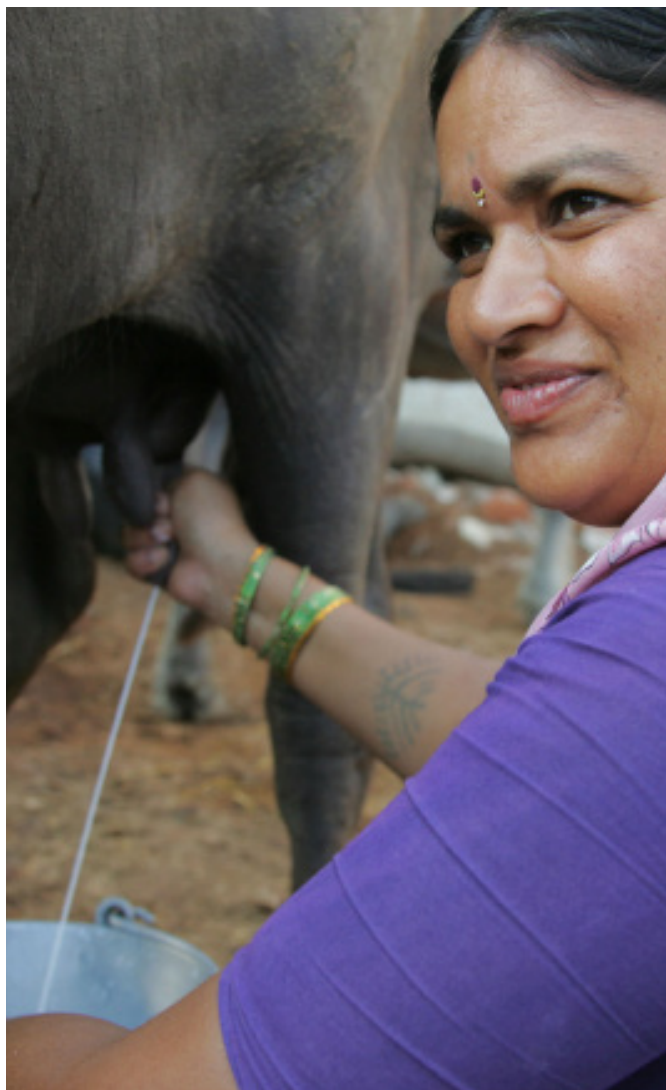
In 2015, the international community adopted the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all. Greater gender equity is at the heart of many of these goals and the role of small-scale livestock farming in low-and middle-income countries is vital to their achievement.

SDG 1: End world poverty

Because of livestock's central contributions to both individual livelihoods and national development, the international community is not going to go to **to end world poverty (SDG 1)** if it undervalues the major roles play in the economies of developing countries and their peoples.

Worldwide livestock are often the single most important asset of poor households and women are typically responsible for managing these assets. ILRI works to enhance women's access to the growing opportunities in livestock enterprises in developing countries and to the resources needed to manage their animal stock efficiently, profitably and sustainably, thereby increasing the incomes and resilience of women, their households and their communities.

For instance, with research and technical support from the Himmat Society, ILRI and national partners, the number of women's dairy cooperatives in India's rural state of Uttarakhand have grown by 150% in eight years. Dairy production has increased by 300%. There have been clear improvements in the livelihoods of families involved in the federations. The women have used the income from dairy production largely for household expenses, such as school fees, but have also invested in new farm inputs and improved livestock.



SDG 2: End hunger, achieve food security and make agriculture sustainable

Because of livestock's major roles in sustainable agriculture and food production, the world is not going to **end hunger, achieve food security and make agriculture sustainable (SDG2)** without paying greater attention to the animal agriculture that makes small-scale food production viable and renewable on every continent.

All food matters. But animal-source foods matter most to the hundreds of millions of people subsisting on cheap starchy diets, including pregnant and lactating mothers and the more than 300 million stunted, underweight or wasted children under five years of age. The protein and micronutrients of milk, meat and eggs are essential for the physical and cognitive development of children in their first 1,000 days of life and remain vital for their development over the next 3,000. In very poor environments, children face severe challenges in achieving their potential without modest additions of these high nutritious foods containing essential and easily absorbable nutrients. Unless women are enabled to make appropriate decisions over food production, purchase and allocation, the world will not succeed in ending hunger or achieving global food and nutritional security.

ILRI works to empower women, largely by placing the right livestock tools and information in their hands, so that smallholder women can make the best nutritional decisions for themselves and their families. For instance, women beneficiaries of the ILRI-led African Chicken Genetic Gains program in three African countries have access to superior new chicken breeds able to increase their household and market incomes and family nutrition.

SDG 3: Healthy lives and wellbeing of people of all ages

Because of the lifelong difference that animal-source foods make to the world's most vulnerable people, including the growth and cognitive development of children, **healthy lives and the well-being of people of all ages (SDG3)** will be unachievable without actions to ensure that healthy and safe animal-source foods are available to all.

Livestock play important roles in maintaining people's health and well-being. Livestock production generates the regular incomes, often controlled by women, which are needed pay for the health care and education of children. The food produced by livestock nourish poor communities and build their resilience to climate and other shocks. But their close contact with farm animals and livestock food products places women at greater risk of infection from disease.

ILRI takes a one-health approach to livestock disease management, which profitably unites medical, veterinary and environmental health knowledge and practices. As women play a significant role in safeguarding health care of family members and livestock, ILRI enhances their engagement in integrated approaches to human, animal and environmental health.

In East Africa's Kenya and India's state of Assam, more than six million people have access to safer milk today not because stricter rules and regulations were applied but rather because informal milk processors and sellers, mainly women, were given the training and tools by ILRI and national partners to do so much more safely.



SDG 5: Gender equity and empowerment of women and girls

Because of the unique roles livestock play in women's lives, the world will not achieve **gender equity and empowerment of all women and girls (SDG5)** without deliberate efforts to build upon the multiple and enabling roles that livestock play in female livelihoods worldwide.

Women—who make up two-thirds of the world's poor livestock keepers—play critical (if under-expressed, under-reported and under-valued) roles in livestock systems. Women who cannot own land, capital or other major productive resources often are able to own farm animals, particularly small stock such as goats, chickens and caviés. And the benefits obtained by women in developing countries from their livestock enterprises tend to be invested back

into feeding their families and educating their children, with a woman's regular income from dairy or poultry often paying for the education of her daughters.

Evidence indicates that women's empowerment is hurt rather than helped if men are left out of the picture, so ILRI is taking gender-sensitive and -transformative approaches to livestock development and focusing on men as well as women while supporting women in building their social as well as economic capital.

Following work by national and CGIAR research centres, including ILRI, a 'women's empowerment livestock index' developed for one African and one Central American country is refining livestock interventions for greater gender equity.



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The International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) works with partners worldwide to enhance the roles that livestock play in food security and poverty alleviation, principally in Africa and Asia. The outcomes of these research partnerships help people in developing countries keep their farm animals alive and productive, increase and sustain their livestock and farm productivity, find profitable markets for their animal products, and reduce the risk of livestock-related diseases.

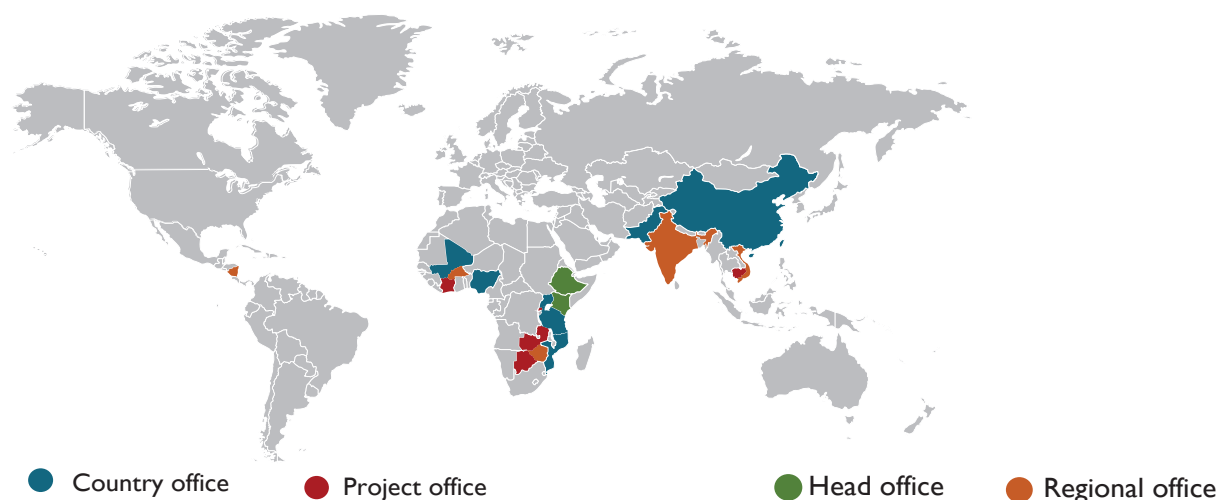
ILRI's mission is to improve food and nutritional security and to reduce poverty in developing countries through research for efficient, safe and sustainable use of livestock—ensuring better lives through livestock. Working closely with its partners, ILRI's three strategic objectives are:

- develop, test, adapt and promote science-based practices that—being sustainable and scalable—achieve better lives through livestock.
- provide compelling scientific evidence in ways that persuade decision-makers—from farms to boardrooms and parliaments—that smarter policies and bigger livestock investments can deliver significant socioeconomic, health and environmental dividends to both poor nations and households.
- increase capacity among ILRI's key stakeholders and the institute itself so that they can make better use of livestock science and investments for better lives through livestock.

ILRI's skills and expertise include our three main pillars for animal production—animal health, feeds and genetics—as well as, and more specifically: biology, molecular biology, microbiology, epidemiology, biotechnology, diagnostics and vaccine development; ecology, agricultural systems and agricultural value chains; sociology, gender and poverty analysis, participatory research and impact assessment; market economics; and development communications and knowledge sharing.

The International Livestock Research Institute is an international research institute with its headquarters in Kenya and co-hosted by the Government of Ethiopia in Addis Ababa. It works through a network of regional and country offices and project in East and Southeast Asia, South Asia, East, Central, Southern and West Africa.

ILRI leads the CGIAR Research Program on Livestock, leads 'Food Systems for Healthier Diets' and co-leads, with the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, 'Improving Human Health'—two of five flagships of the CRP on Agriculture for Nutrition and Health and contributes to seven other CGIAR research programs and platforms. Staff members work in integrated sciences and biosciences programs that develop and deliver science-based practices, provide scientific evidence for decision-making and develop capacities of livestock-sector stakeholders. With the African Union/New Partnership for Africa's Development Planning and Coordination Agency, ILRI also manages the Biosciences eastern and central Africa (BecA)-ILRI Hub.



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